

LITURGICAL REFORM

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

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Being the speeches made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Canon R. C. D. Jasper and Dr Stella Brook at a Conference held in February 1966, together with a commentary on the discussion.

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Speeches

THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Most Rev. and Rt Hon. Arthur Michael Ramsey

It may be useful if I speak about the general pattern of Liturgical Reform. Today's Conference is concerned with forms of service proposed as alternatives to those in the Prayer Book for the occasions for which the Prayer Book makes provision. It should be made clear that under the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure* there can be lawful provision of services in various ways to meet needs and occasions for which the Prayer Book does not provide. Clause 6 of the Measure refers to the right of the Minister to use services considered suitable by him for such occasions subject to any rules of the Convocation of the Province. Clause 4 (1) mentions the powers of the Convocations to approve forms for such occasions. Clause 4 (2) mentions the powers of the Ordinary, who is usually the Diocesan Bishop, to approve forms for such occasions.

These procedures are already familiar to us. Thus a parish priest frequently decides himself the forms to be used at children's services, mission services or family services. The Diocesan Bishop frequently decides the forms to be used for the consecration of churches, the institution of an incumbent to a benefice or special diocesan commemorations. The Convocation of a Province may decide forms for these or other occasions not yet met by the Prayer Book. It is worth while to remind ourselves that there is this large field of public worship outside the Prayer Book services and much scope for new experiments lies within it. It will be important for parishes, dioceses and the Convocations to review this field, and for the Archbishops to ask the Liturgical Commission to give what help is needed.

The major task however is that which concerns services alternative to those of the Prayer Book. It is necessary to remember how the

* For a summary of the provisions of this Measure see Appendix.

provision for experimental changes under the Measure is linked with the clarification of Lawful Authority. When the Measure comes into effect on 1 May, 1966, it will be lawful for the Convocations and the House of Laity to sanction alternative services by two-thirds majorities. It will also be clear that as regards Prayer Book services only those will be lawful which are in the Book of Common Prayer or sanctioned under the Measure. The parish priest will in future be in no doubt as to the meaning of the words in the Declaration of Assent 'the form in the said Book prescribed and none other except so far as shall be ordered by Lawful Authority'.

Now the testing and acceptance of entirely new forms of service alternative to those of the Prayer Book will inevitably take some time; and no one thinks that the clergy and laity wish to have a period of years in which the text and the rubrics of the 1662 Prayer Book would be the only lawful provision available. It is therefore necessary to give legality to such current practice as is widely desired and is congruous with the doctrine of our Church. That is the reason for the booklet entitled *Alternative Services, First Series*. These will be proposed for authorisation for seven years. The Series is not new or exciting. It is not a work of revision so much as a work of current authorisation. Its authorisation will certainly reduce confusion rather than add to it, and will make tolerable the position of consciences which would otherwise be limited to the letter of 1662. I believe that the more quickly the services in the First Series can be agreed to (and of course they can still be improved) the easier it will be for the Church to give its attention to the consideration and the sanctioning of wholly new experimental projects.

One word more about the immediate position. From 1 May it will be clear that legality belongs, as regards Prayer Book services, only to 1662 and to what is sanctioned under the Measure. There will therefore be an inevitable gap between law and practice at the outset. But the Bishops will be right in appealing for loyalty and goodwill in the ending of whatever may remain unlawful as and when lawful provision is made in respect of the whole field of Prayer Book services.

Now for the Second Series of Services. This is the beginning of the new provisions, and we hope that additions to the series will soon be available, particularly services for Holy Baptism. It would

be lawful to sanction any of these services straight away for a seven year period, but the presumption is that most of them will call for a two year testing in selected parishes. A word about the Draft of a new service of Holy Communion. There is not the slightest desire on the part of anyone, least of all the Archbishops, to delay the authorisation of that service for experimental use. It is described as a Draft because the Liturgical Commission desires to do some more work on it. But that work need not be delayed and it could benefit from any comments or criticisms made at the present Conference.

As to procedure, it is hoped that such services in the First Series as may have been approved by the Convocation in May can be approved by the House of Laity meeting separately on 10 June. It is much to be hoped that the process of liturgical reform will not be so slow and cumbrous as the revision of Canon Law has been. It will be for the Steering Committee on Liturgical Reform to devise procedures; and if a technique can be devised for treating details by a process of reference back rather than of attempts at drafting in the Convocations themselves, it will be well. Nor is a final agreement on every word of a service necessary or possible if that service is to submit to a two year test in selected parishes.

Lastly, what of the future? The Measure makes it possible for an Alternative Service to have a run of sixteen years in all. After that the powers under the Measure in respect of that particular service will be exhausted, and as the law at present stands it will be necessary to embody any fresh proposal in a Measure which must pass the Church Assembly and Parliament. Meanwhile, however, the Commission on Church and State will have done its work, and much else may have happened in the life of our Church and in its relations to other Churches. I believe however that our ability to face new situations with strength and unity will depend partly upon our present readiness by God's grace to use the opportunity given by the Prayer Book Measure with unity, charity, tolerance and imagination.

CANON R. C. D. JASPER

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If we are to understand the work which the Commission has been trying to do, we must look first at the terms of reference of the Commission and then, secondly, at the terms of the Measure itself.

When we began work in 1955 we were asked simply to consider questions of a liturgical character submitted to them from time to time by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and to report thereon to the Archbishops. This meant that we had no authority to initiate projects ourselves; we had to do as we were told, and not all the tasks that we were given immediately concerned services in the Book of Common Prayer. Now at the end of last year these instructions were made more specific and we were given four tasks: First, to prepare forms of service at the request of the Archbishops. Secondly, to assist in the planning and consideration of lawful experiments. Thirdly, to exchange information and advice on liturgical matters within and without the Anglican communion. Finally, to undertake such other tasks in connection with the Liturgy as the Archbishops may ask.

Now these terms indicate quite clearly that the revision of the Book of Common Prayer has been, and still is, only one of the tasks which the Liturgical Commission has to do, and in fact we do spend a considerable time in considering work which is sent to us from other parts of the Anglican communion. Some Provinces, undertaking the work of producing a Book of Common Prayer for the first time, are glad of what help and advice we can give, but in addition to this we now exchange information with the liturgical bodies of other churches. Both the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church ask us to examine and comment on the things that they are doing in the liturgical field, and during the past twelve months we have been invited to exchange views on texts in the vernacular with the Church of Rome.

It does mean then that we are a very busy set of people purely and simply in the liturgical field, and it is unfair, as some people have suggested, to say that we are unduly slow. We work as fast as we can, bearing in mind the broad front on which we must necessarily work. But we are able to keep abreast of developments

elsewhere and we do avoid the danger of working in a watertight compartment. The growing area of agreement in the liturgical field is certainly distinctly encouraging, and the possibility of a common use of a number of agreed texts is by no means remote. But we must emphasise this fact, that we do work on a broad front and not a narrow one, and the amount of work which the Commission gets through is far greater than some people would have the Church believe.

Now I need say very little about the Measure itself. We know that it provides for more than one type of service. So far we have been dealing with services under Section I of the Measure. But that does not mean to say that we do not envisage work under other Sections of the Measure, nor have we forgotten them.

If we look particularly at our proposed revisions of Mattins and Evensong, we should look at them in the light of these facts which I have just stated. It is a modest revision and it could be very little else. Structurally—and let me emphasise that—I believe that there is very little wrong with them as non-Eucharistic forms of public worship, and my experience of travelling round the country pretty extensively in the past twelve months has been that these two services are still an acceptable form of Sunday worship for a great many people, and those people who still regard these services with a degree of affection have a right to be considered. They should not be dismissed as reactionary or out of touch, and if these services can be improved, even in small ways, then they should be improved, and the Commission states quite clearly in its introduction, in the very first page, that it was Sunday use which they primarily had in mind when dealing with these services.

Now much of the criticism which is levelled against these services is concerned not so much with their structure as with psalmody and lectionary, and I can sympathise a great deal with what is said on both these questions. On the Psalter, I would agree that the introduction of a revised Psalter with a common binding is a step in the right direction, but I believe it need not be the final word and I think there is still room for further exploration, further experiments, both in the form of the Psalter and in its methods of use.

Again I believe that we need a new Lectionary, but it will be a waste of time to do any work on this subject until we have had a good look at the Calendar itself. Now work on the Calendar is in

fact being done at this moment on a joint basis by the Joint Liturgical Group, and we hope that their proposals will be published before the end of this year. If these proposals can find acceptance, Lectionary reform need not be long delayed.

The Commission is also well aware of the misgivings about Mattins and Evensong as a daily office; misgivings which are felt especially by younger clergy and by ordinands. Here again the Joint Liturgical Group has been doing some work and I think that before long they might produce a briefer and more flexible form of daily office which might find acceptance both by clergy and laity of a number of the churches of this country and not specifically of just one. Here may I assure Mr Wansey that other forms of psalmody are under consideration. Some months ago I myself sent to the Sub-committee dealing with this problem a copy of his New Testament Psalms. What will be decided about them is another matter.

Then again there are the possibilities of forms of evangelistic or family service—something short, something flexible, and perhaps involving the use of material which is much more radical. It might well be here that we enter the province of Common Order rather than Common Prayer, thinking in terms of shapes and patterns of services rather than in terms of texts, because it might well be that here texts would date far more quickly than elsewhere.

Some years ago the late Dean of York, Dr Milner-White, suggested to me that the section in the Book of Common Prayer known as the Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea might be entirely recast, embodying services of this type, and being available not only to those at sea but to the Church as a whole. I think this is a suggestion which is worth considering, and as a start I have been having talks in recent months with groups of Service chaplains, college chaplains and others, seeking the benefit of their advice since they have experience with services of this type and are particularly concerned with other people. May I say here too—because His Grace mentioned it in his speech—that so far as the future is concerned and the services which the Commission itself hopes to publish, I can say now that before the end of this year we hope to do two vital things, namely, to present a complete report on the Eucharist and also to present a brand new report on Baptism and Confirmation.

It means, if we are thinking in terms of Mattins and Evensong, that what you see in Series Two is not the final word on a Daily Office or on a family service, a mission service or anything of that type. These are separate questions and they have not been forgotten.

What are the guiding lines on which the Commission has tried to do its work? Well, first of all, there must be the recognition that there are tensions—that are extraordinarily difficult to resolve—which exist between the different schools of thought within the Church itself. However the Church of England is what it is, and it would be wrong to ignore these tensions or to pretend that they do not exist. But then there are tensions of another sort; there are tensions between those who, for one reason or another, are reluctant to see much change in the Book of Common Prayer and who want to keep it substantially as it is (I think sometimes this desire to retain a great deal of the Prayer Book is stronger than some people would imagine) and against them, those who feel that the Book of Common Prayer is completely out of touch with life today and that something drastic in the way of reform is needed. Now to produce a Liturgy which will accommodate such differences is bound to be extraordinarily difficult—some people might say it is quite impossible—but at least we have got to try, and our first principle has therefore been that of ‘Let tolerance and charity prevail if they possibly can’.

We have tried to retain sufficient that is familiar to ensure that there is no drastic break with the past. We have tried to accommodate as many views as possible, either by a careful choice of terms which have a wide meaning or by making permissive those forms of prayer which some might feel that they cannot conscientiously use. I might remind you that this is not weak and it is not dishonest. There are plenty of precedents for this if one chooses to study liturgical history.

Now if we approach this task of liturgical revision with a spirit of intolerance, if we say to others, ‘We do not want this, therefore you cannot have it’, then we can only end in failure. Let me illustrate this by quoting some words—the final sentences which doubtless some of you have heard me quote before—which conclude Dr Darwell Stone’s *History of the Doctrine of the Eucharist*. They are very relevant. ‘There is a great need of a generous temper and an ungrudging way of viewing the opinions and expressions which

are least congenial. Rough methods of controversy have done little to promote real understanding of the questions with which they have dealt. . . Whole series of volumes of controversial theology leave the student wondering over the want of insight and imagination and candour and justice which led to their being penned. . . The rejection of a particular method of the presence of Christ has too often been understood as if it were the rejection of the presence of Christ altogether. The separation of His special presence from the Elements has too often been thought to mean the assertion of His absence from the rite. The repudiation of particular notions of sacrifice has often been regarded as the denial of sacrifice in any true sense. Because many have avowed less than others would desire, they have often been supposed to acknowledge nothing at all. It is a reasonable conclusion that the official language and the official ceremonial of great Christian bodies call for a liberal and a considerable interpretation. The practical ecclesiastic, no less than the theological student, will do well to pause before he binds any such language or any such ceremonial to the narrowest interpretation of which it is capable, and to be quite sure of his ground before he says that a document or action has closed a door. In the Mystery of the Eucharist, where human thought is so apt to go astray and human language is so inadequate to express even human thought, the interpreter will most likely be right who is patient of a wide latitude of interpretation and gentle towards what seem to him to be offending expressions. Among all sections of Christians there is need of the remembrance that it is the positive and not the negative, devotion and not denunciation, which helps the soul.*

Then again there is the principle of flexibility, allowing people to use services in ways which are suitable to their own local circumstances, and in the period of experiment rigid uniformity is hardly desirable. Provided the essentials of a rite are safeguarded, an element of variety is not a bad thing, and indeed we may invoke Article 34, which states that it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike. So we have tried to avoid tying down services with too many rubrics and we have permitted variations with a liberal use of 'may' rather than 'shall'.

* Darwell Stone: *A History of the Doctrine of the Eucharist* 1909. Vol. 2 pp. 650-1.

These principles of tolerance and flexibility are also reflected in our use of language. I must say something about this, although Dr Brook, who knows far more about it than I do, will be saying something subsequently. We have tried to preserve as much as we can of what is familiar, and where we ourselves have tried to produce new forms we have aimed, perhaps not always successfully, at something which is formal and simple without being archaic. I use the word 'formal' quite deliberately, because if we accept that the principle of liturgy does require a formal style of language, we can solve most of the problems which concern us on this particular issue. I believe that this choice, which has been put before us in recent weeks—Tudor English versus contemporary English—is a thoroughly mistaken one. And I believe that it is a mistake to use either term. It drastically over-simplifies the issue. It is true that Cranmer was a Tudor and it is true that many of the words which he used no longer have relevance today, but there was something about the style which Cranmer used which is quite unique and his work has only to be compared with forms of prayer which were put out during the reign of Queen Elizabeth to see that Cranmer and Elizabethan prayers are as different as chalk and cheese. Cranmer produced a Liturgy which was not only readable, it was also sayable, and it was also to a large extent singable. Cranmer knew the rules of rhetoric and you cannot produce Liturgy without them, and those rules still hold good today.

Again, when we come to think of contemporary English, what is contemporary English? We have to accept the fact that there is no norm by which to judge contemporary English. Are we to say that it is the English of a *Times* leader or are we to say that it is the English perpetrated by the latest 'pop' group, and which group shall we cater for?

Now since I have been asked this straight question by one person I might as well give a straight answer—what is it that I am opposed to myself? There are two things which I object to. The first is this: I am opposed to the practice of taking an existing service out of the Book of Common Prayer and trying to paraphrase it from the beginning. I am not suggesting that this is not a laudable thing to try and do, but it is a waste of time and energy. It is possible sometimes to achieve a credible alternative to perhaps one particular prayer or even a body of particular prayers, but it is extraordinarily

difficult to achieve a high standard of performance throughout the whole proceeding, and the price we pay for increased intelligibility I think is too high. We lose what is familiar, we very often lose rhythm, we very often lose dignity, and also in the process I think sometimes we under-estimate the intellectual ability of those people by whom these services are to be used. They are not all babes in arms and most of them are capable of being taught and are willing to learn. It is, moreover, dangerous to attempt a wholesale paraphrasing of theological or liturgical words and phrases. Very often there is no adequate alternative. Bishop Headlam once said that if you try to paraphrase the Creed you will probably find out when you have finished that you have not paraphrased it, you have written a new creed, and there is something very true in his remark. We have to remember, to coin a delightful phrase of Bishop Gore, that there is a kind of clearness of statement which suits material objects but simply does not apply to spiritual things, and he points out that human language is not only a means of communication, it is also a means of expression, and that human language very often can but dimly adumbrate and not fully precisely define the eternal verities.

Now if the old won't do, bury it with decency and respect, leave it alone and try and produce something new; but don't try to make mutton look like lamb. It might be worth recalling that the Congregationalist Church, with its generations of experience of free prayer, laid down in the introduction to its *Book of Services and Prayers* which came out in 1959 this quite explicit statement: 'It is desirable that when classic prayers of the Church are used, the generally accepted and often familiar wording should be accurately followed.' So that is the first thing that I just don't approve of.

The second thing that I am equally opposed to is to reduce prayer to what I can only call conversation with God on terms of undue familiarity; when one addresses God in the same terms, as it were, as if one was addressing the man next door over the garden wall, that is familiarity and it will lead to lack of respect if we do not take care, and the uniqueness of God and the special relationship we have with Him is something which I believe requires a hieratic language but which need not for one moment lack beauty or warmth or love.

Finally, what are we to do with these proposals? The task of revision, even of those services which you see before you, is not

over. We have only got through the initial stage. The next and perhaps the most important stage of revision rests with you and with the Church. These services have to be tried and revised in the light of experience and I believe it would be a mistake to settle down to a detailed examination of these services now, line by line, compelling the Church to wait perhaps for months before they have any services at all which they can try out. There must be a careful revision of these drafts, that is obvious, but what is needed now I believe is a fairly rapid decision about the experiment. If you feel that any of these proposals are hopelessly wide of the mark, don't waste valuable time trying to patch them up—throw them out and we will take them away and start again. It would be better to turn them down and go away and make a fresh start than to try the interminable process of revising in a large body of people, which can only end in something highly unsatisfactory. On the other hand, if you believe a service to be on the right lines, if it is worth trying out, give it a try, recognising with us that it is not perfect. It should not be impossible to find ways and means of amending even during the period of implementation.

It was Alcuin of York more than a thousand years ago who went across the Channel to the Emperor Charles the Great to undertake liturgical revision for the Empire. He combined the old with the new, he invoked precisely the same principles then as we are trying to follow now, and around an essential core people were left free to experiment and adapt with a whole variety of material. Now he met with considerable success and the people themselves found what they wanted, and much of the work which he initiated lasted for centuries. If our efforts today can meet only with the smallest fraction of the success he enjoyed, we shall feel grateful and feel that after all our labours have not been in vain.

DR STELLA BROOK

'It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her Publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.'

The quotation may usefully be applied to the controversy about liturgical language which now occupies us: on the one hand, there is the danger of over-great conservatism; on the other hand, there is the danger of over-great radical change. Clearly, one must take sides in the discussion of the right nature and function of liturgical language and it is healthy that this should be so. The respective merits of the traditional and the present-day in language should be weighed. Nevertheless, having done the weighing, one has to come down on one or other side of the balance. Equipoise is not possible.

The prime purpose of a liturgical service is to pay honour to God. Consequently, the prime purpose of liturgical language is that, in it, words should be used in the most seemly and comely and decorous manner possible. The liturgy does not exist primarily for purposes of instruction or initiation. Instruction and initiation are necessary and must be the concern of any genuinely living church, but the place for them lies in the more informal context of the sermon or the discussion group.

In the liturgical use of language, as in the visual aspects of worship, something fashioned by men is offered up to God, and the old saying 'only the best is good enough for God' applies just as much to words as it does, say, to altar frontals. The question that must be asked is not, 'Is this traditional or contemporary' but 'Is this good or bad?' Certainly one does not wish liturgical language to become so utterly divorced from current idiom as to be incomprehensible to those who use it; but, equally certainly, the offering to God will be the poorer if the liturgy of a particular time has to express itself wholly in the current idiom of that particular time. Current idiom is fleeting, the liturgy is not. Each successive century has something to contribute from its own particular idiom; no century can provide the perfect form. To me, the idea of a wholly 'contemporary' liturgy—a liturgy composed exclusively in the current idiom of 1966—seems presumptuous. On the one hand, such a liturgy will have nothing to offer to the future, when

our own immediate idiom will have lost its currency; on the other hand, it denies all virtue to our linguistic inheritance from the past. I do not see how one can reconcile such attitudes towards the language of the liturgy with the conception of the faith as handed down and on from generation to generation.

This argument can, I know, become a boomerang. Those who dislike traditional forms of language might well reply that the opponents of change are endeavouring to perpetuate the current idiom of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, there is one very important difference between our own age and that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, namely, our attitude towards the spoken word. One does not wish to appear reactionary, but the spread of general theoretical literacy has not been an unmixed blessing. I use the word 'theoretical' deliberately. It seems to me that, during the last century we have brought into being large groups of people who are, technically, able to read but who, in fact, do not in any real sense read at all. Unfortunately, because they have acquired a superficial acquaintance with written words on a page, these groups have lost the age old art of listening. They have lost the ability to listen critically to words, they have not acquired the ability to look critically at words. When the English liturgy was devised, and revised, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the situation was different. That shadowy figure, the 'man-in-the-street', was no doubt illiterate by comparison with his modern counterpart, but he savoured what he heard. As Miss M. C. Bradbrook has said, in speaking of 'Elizabethan habits of reading, writing and listening', 'the relationship between the spoken and the written language was very close. . . . The vocabulary of the literary man was only different from that of the ordinary man in being wider, and even the groundling was prepared to listen to a good many high-sounding terms which he could not understand.' She also reminds us of the 'habits of exact memorising and close concentration upon the actual phrasing of the text' which resulted from the practice of causing children to 'memorise and repeat the substance of the sermons which they heard on Sundays.*

These remarks seem to me to touch the core of our problem. Liturgical language is primarily spoken language, but it is a highly formalised variety of spoken language. It is not just current, easy,

* *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 75-96.

vernacular usage. It involves an appraisal of the possibilities of spoken language. It has to take into account such homely but necessary considerations as ease of pronunciation, in speaking, intoning or singing; it has to take into account the ear's desire for good rhythmic balance; it has to take into account the aural satisfaction of rhyme and chime. It involves a heightening of customary speech forms and rhythms, not a levelling-down. Liturgical style has also to satisfy the silent reader, as well as the hearer, and this is a great demand to make on any language. For my own part, I think that only verse-drama stretches the resources of a language to the same extent.

I think that the comparison with verse-drama has another use. Surely we must face this question: for how large a section of the present community has contemporary verse-drama any meaning? Some critics of the proposed revised Orders of Service have suggested that contemporary poets might be approached to help in the devising. This is an excellent suggestion, but my own view is that people who cannot understand the traditional formulae of the Book of Common Prayer are probably equally incapable of understanding the language of Christopher Fry. The 'intelligible' and the 'contemporary' are not necessarily to be equated. One has, or one has not, an informed approach to the use of words. If the informed approach is lacking, then the precise date of the words of the text is irrelevant. Conscious, sophisticated employment of modern idiom can puzzle the not-very-literate reader quite as much as the employment of an older idiom.

This brings me to my next major point. If the words of the liturgy are to be confined to 'contemporary English', just whose form of English do we use? There is not one single norm. We have a splintering-off. First of all, there is the general divorce between spoken and written forms of English. Then we have the varieties of contemporary English current in different sorts of parish. The current idiom of the industrial working-class parish is not identical with that of the suburban upper-middle class parish. In their turn, the residents in an upper-middle class parish do not speak in quite the same idiom as those who belong to a parish closely associated with a University. Really, one can't place a special value on a particular social group and say that theirs is the norm of speech to be adopted. If one modernises totally, one is in

danger of modernising for just one section of the community. There is no such thing as a good present-day style equally acceptable to everyone within the body of the Church.

So far, I have tried, as well as I can, to be dispassionate. Nevertheless, a point does come at which one has to state one's personal beliefs. I believe that the original Book of Common Prayer provided us with a combination of accurate statement and lively, sinewy expression which we discard at our peril. I believe also that, when people come to Church, they are, consciously or sub-consciously, looking for a special form of language. Easy intelligibility (except with the impatient and egoistic young) is not, I think, the quality primarily required. What is looked for is, rather, the evocative power of words—even if the words are not always perfectly understood.

This is not a plea for archaism for archaism's sake. There is no reason whatever why we should perpetuate some of the now out-of-date grammatical forms of the Book of Common Prayer. *Spake* was once natural current usage; *spoke* might well now replace it. Similarly *hath* and *cometh* might be replaced by *has* and *comes*, and so forth. The use of the second singular personal pronoun is more complicated. I myself think that one could well substitute 'you' when a particular human being is addressed (for example, in the Words of Administration at the Communion), but I doubt very much whether one should substitute *you* for *thou* when God is addressed. The problem here is psychological as well as linguistic. With the general decline of the use of the second singular personal pronoun (except in the north of England) *thou* and *thee* have become, in the popular mind, almost synonyms for God. The Book of Common Prayer is not solely responsible for this; the Authorised Version of the Bible and many religious writings in English, whether in prose or verse, have contributed to this tradition. Furthermore, if one addresses God in the second person plural, one is likely to find oneself caught up in the unfortunate formula 'You who', which, phonetically, is identical with the slang greeting 'Yoo-hoo'.

I began by speaking of liturgical language as used to the glory of God, but of course it should also be used to the help of man. Now, I cannot think that man is significantly helped if the language of the liturgy becomes simply the language of the factory floor. The

encounter with liturgical language should be an enrichment of experience, not a repetition of the ordinariness of everyday life. If the Church is to do her job properly, she ought, amongst other things, to educate men in the loving and serious use of words. She should raise up, not stoop down. It is right that the language of her liturgy should represent a heightening of normal verbal experience, it is right that it should be formal, hieratic, not dependent solely on current idiom. It is right that the Church should draw not only on things new, but on things old, since these are part of her inherited treasure which it is our duty to hand on to future ages.

Commentary

Much of the discussion which followed the three introductory speeches was concerned with the question of whether the traditional liturgical language used in the new services should or should not be replaced by contemporary English. On one side it was argued that common worship should be in the common language of today and that 'plain English' would make more appeal to people who were at present out of touch with the Church. It was also suggested, and more than one speaker approved of the suggestion, that there should in fact, be *three* series of services—the first being the existing Prayer Book with the minor modifications of the First Series, the second a revision along the lines of the Second Series, and the third a really adventurous attempt at worship in the language of today.

Those who preferred the use of traditional language doubted whether modern English would bring people back to Church and pointed out the difficulty of turning the traditional phraseology into contemporary words. One speaker said it was doubtful whether there was anyone in the Church of England who was capable of re-writing the Liturgy in contemporary English, since those who most wanted it in modern language appeared themselves to be insensitive to words.

The general principles of liturgical revision were also discussed, and it was argued that we had lived so long with liturgical anarchy that we might well have lost sight of the principles on which liturgy should be made. More than one speaker emphasised the importance of getting the new services into the churches as soon as possible.

FIRST SERIES

The First Series of Alternative Services was introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who began by pointing out that there was a gap at the end of the booklet to be filled by an Order for the Communion of the Sick. It would be lawful under the Measure to provide an alternative Order for this service, but since this had been found difficult in the past the bishops were anxious that there should

be full informal discussion between laity, clergy and bishops before proposals were actually made. It was hoped that proposals might be brought forward later this year.

On the general content of the series the Archbishop observed that the services for Morning and Evening Prayer were those of the 1928 Prayer Book, the Table of Psalms was the table which had been before the Convocations a little time ago, and it would be permissible to use any lectionary or versions of the Psalms and the Scriptures which were lawful at the time. No provision had been made for further prayers at the end of Morning and Evening Prayer, but when the service proper was over the minister would be free in the matter of occasional prayers and thanksgivings rather than being limited to a set series of them. If this point was not sufficiently clear it would be possible to introduce a rubric to clarify it.

Of the Occasional Offices in the First Series the Archbishop noted that the provisions for Baptism, Confirmation and Burial of the Dead were those of 1928, but there were slight differences in the Marriage Service, e.g. in the freedom of choice for the Psalm, the provision for blessing the ring and the rubric allowing the vows to be used in the 1662 form if they were preferred to the 1928 form. (Apparently, the Archbishop observed, there were still a good many wives who wanted to be obedient.) The Service for the Churching of Women had not been included, because it was not one of the happier adventures of the 1928 Book; possibly the Thanksgiving for Women after Childbirth in the Second Series might win acceptance for early adoption.

With regard to the Service of Holy Communion the Archbishop said that the structure of the rite was that of 1662, and the deviations from the 1662 rite were of three kinds. There were familiar ones, like the more frequent use of the salutation 'the Lord be with you', the provision of alternatives to the Ten Commandments and the provision of more Proper Prefaces; there were also some small, newer features for which there was considerable desire and of which there was already a fair amount of unlawful practice, such as rubrics allowing the congregation to join in more parts of the service, allowing the Prayer for the Church to be broken up by a series of congregational responses, and providing for an Old Testament lection if desired; and finally the third class of deviation was in the Prayer of Consecration, i.e. by letting the Prayer of Oblation, or

part of it, and the Lord's Prayer follow upon the Consecration. On this last point the Archbishop said he hoped they would not have many pleas that such an arrangement of the Prayer of Consecration was contrary to Anglican doctrine; he believed that to regard such a structure of the prayer as involving doctrinal error was to go for a very narrow doctrinal interpretation in a matter in which there had been some variety, not of doctrinal content but of doctrinal emphasis, since the sixteenth century. 'We cannot be narrower than our fathers,' said the Archbishop.

There was applause when the Archbishop said in conclusion that he hoped it would not take a very long time to get the services sanctioned. There was certainly room for improvements, and some of these could be included by rubrics or by text before the services were finally passed. 'I believe,' said the Archbishop, 'that the passing of this Alternative Series will not be a measure of Prayer Book revision but rather a measure of current authorisation, bringing a reasonable tolerance, a reasonable order and a good deal less confusion than exists in our Church at present, and that by adopting it the Convocations will be ready to give their minds to the important task of really fresh liturgical revision.'

In the ensuing discussion those who approved of the First Series urged that it should be legalised as quickly as possible, since it represented what was actually happening now in the Church, and we should then know the point from which, and the basis on which, true liturgical revision should begin. One of the critics of the series condemned it as 'a horrid compilation' which 'showed the chaos of today's worship', and another speaker suggested that if the series was to be used it should be uncontroversial. It would save time, he urged, if the series were withdrawn or the controversial points were removed. The permissive use of the 'Kyrie Eleison' after the Commandments in the Communion service was also criticised, and one speaker asked, 'Does God hear us better if he hears us in Greek?' The suggestion by some speakers that the series involved alterations in doctrine was answered by another who pointed out the danger of reading into the text things which were not there.

In concluding the discussion the Archbishop of Canterbury observed that the First Series was part of a policy worked out in

discussion between Bishops, Clergy and Laity, with the objects of providing quickly for the needs of lawful authority and of saving time as experimental new provisions came in. On the question of praying for the departed, which had been mentioned in the debate, the Archbishop observed that it would be controversial to compel anyone to do it, but it was also controversial to make it impossible for anyone to do it. In answer to a question whether it was the intention of the bishops to make the First Series permanent, he said that they intended to discover the Church's mind on this matter and to help to give effect to it.

SECOND SERIES

(a) Morning and Evening Prayer, Intercessions and Thanksgivings

The Services of Morning and Evening Prayer, together with Intercessions and Thanksgivings, in the Second Series of Alternative Services were introduced by the Dean of Bristol (the Very Rev. D. E. W. Harrison), who pointed out that the Liturgical Commission had been asked by the Archbishops to consider the revision of Morning and Evening Prayer, not to consider new services on radically different principles which might replace them. Moreover, the Commission had been primarily concerned with Morning and Evening Prayer as congregational services on Sunday, though they hoped that what they had done went some way—if only a little way—towards making their weekday use more acceptable.

What they had done, he explained, was to restore Morning and Evening Prayer, the office proper, substantially to its first English form of 1549, beginning with 'O Lord, open thou our lips' and ending with the Third Collect. They had, however, made two important alterations: they had arranged that psalms sung as canticles might be sung in other versions, by removing them from the text; and they had recommended the experimental use of the *Te Deum* in one or more of its component parts. They had also suggested (though not unanimously) that the experiment should be tried of using the *Te Deum* after the Second Lesson instead of after the First. As to the text of canticles, he said that common agreement between the Churches might soon be reached on these, so no interim alteration had been made.

Other changes, the Dean continued, included a new form both of Confession and of Absolution which they hoped was sufficient in content and direct in language. The provision of these alternative forms had been made obligatory both by the Lambeth Conference and by widespread comment in this country. With regard to what followed the Third Collect, they had made available a wide selection of Prayers and Thanksgivings, some from 1928, some from recent collections and some new. The Litany was given in its ancient form, but shorn of what was originally an intercession in time of war and considerably shortened, and they had also provided three short Litanies—for the State, for the Church and for the common good. Not everyone would wish to use all these forms: pastoral knowledge and evangelistic insight would be the guide in each particular situation.

In conclusion the Dean observed that in his judgment liturgy was no substitute for evangelism. ‘We shall not evangelise the country simply by producing a liturgy in a new form and in quite different language,’ he said. He also added that they had not attempted to revise the language of the canticles and that they had not tried to do anything about hymns, primarily because they were not asked to do so. ‘Woe betide any liturgical commission which tries to put hymnbooks into acceptable modern language and into respectable theology!’ the Dean observed.

The discussion of these new services revealed much support for them, though there was again criticism of the use of traditional language. It was suggested, for instance, that ‘Spirit’ should be used instead of ‘Ghost’ and ‘eternal’ instead of ‘everlasting’. Other points of criticism were that there was no alternative to the *Te Deum*, that fresh canticles were urgently needed, that the Revised Psalter *Venite* was unsatisfactory and partly incomprehensible, the new Confession was less searching, and the new Absolution was not so comforting as ‘He pardoneth and absolveth’. The service might have said less about the ‘chosen people’ and more of God being among us. In reply to those who wanted an entirely different kind of service it was pointed out that the Liturgical Commission had begun its work on a different brief, and had no freedom to produce the type of service now being asked for. Prayers and Intercessions had been provided, but there was

completely free choice on what prayers should be used after the Third Collect.

An appeal was made for an Evangelistic Evensong, and the Archbishop of York, who spoke towards the end of the debate, said that such an appeal could not be ignored. Such a service, he suggested, could be formal and dignified, yet modern, with variety and room for experimentation. Canon Jasper, who wound up the debate, also said that an evangelistic family service was very much in the Commission's minds. Since last summer he had gone round and collected many services and memoranda from chaplains in the armed forces, schools chaplains and others. The Commission, he assured the conference, was doing something about these requests as fast as it could.

(b) Thanksgiving after Childbirth

The new service for Thanksgiving After Childbirth was introduced by the Provost of Derby (the Very Rev. R. A. Beddoes). He explained that the service commonly called the Churching of Women was referred to the Liturgical Commission because it was generally considered unsatisfactory in character for the present day. After consultation with a fairly large and representative number of people whose judgment and opinion were thought to be valuable a number of points emerged quite clearly. These were that the revised service should bear no indication of origin as a rite of purification; that its central theme should be that of the wonder of God's creation and thanksgiving for the birth of the child as part of that creation; that the thanksgiving for safe delivery was still immensely important and should be retained; that the husband should be able to share in the service and that a prayer should be included for the parents and home; and that the mother, or mother and father together, should share verbally as much of the service as possible. These were the principles followed in the new service.

The Provost of Derby pointed out that the first prayer of the service included a deliberate echo of the Blessing of the marriage service. It was felt, he said, that there should be echoes of the marriage service throughout the thanksgiving service, even though this meant that it could not easily be used for unmarried mothers. The Commission were not, he added, guilty of a lack of tenderness

towards unmarried mothers, but it seemed that provision would have to be made in a service other than this one for those occasions and those pastoral opportunities.

After discussing the details of the new service the Provost spoke briefly of what might be called the pastoral effectiveness of the service. He was quite certain that it deserved rehabilitation as a pastoral service in the running of the Church, for he could think of no single point in a woman's life when there was a greater possibility of saying something about God's love and protection and blessing than at this particular point. 'I would hope very much,' he concluded, 'that whatever you think in detailed criticism of this service, I could commend it as something the Church could usefully and more fully employ in future as being a particular pastoral opportunity.'

The first speaker in the ensuing debate expressed particular satisfaction in the omission of the word 'churching' from the title of the service; he felt it was superstitious and should not be used, since to many people 'churching' and 'purification' were synonymous terms. One criticism of the service was that it lacked thankfulness for the *presence* of a child, though grateful for the *delivery*. Though simple, direct prayers might be difficult to write, it was suggested that an optional prayer of blessing for the baby might be added.

The admitted unsuitability of the service for unmarried mothers was also mentioned, and it was argued that it might be better not to draw attention to the unmarried state by having a separate service for such mothers. Another speaker suggested that some of the responses, such as 'Marvellous are thy works, and Thou knowest me right well', were hardly realistic, since mothers would find it hard to make responses in a quite unfamiliar language.

(c) The Burial of the Dead

In introducing the new service for the Burial of the Dead the Rev. B. J. Wigan said that the Commission had tried to be guided by Holy Scripture and the Anglican formularies. In discussing the question of prayers for the dead, Mr Wigan commented that, though recommending a prayer of ignorance, the Commission was

not doubtful of the glory of Christ's eternal promises, nor of God's willingness to grant them. 'When we pray for light and peace for the faithful departed we are putting ourselves on God's side and asking for what He Himself has said He wishes to give, without deciding for Him whether a particular person can receive those gifts or not. We are, in fact, going no further than we continually go in praying for things in this world.' Mr Wigan added that by no canon or authority of the Church has the practice of praying for the dead been expressly prohibited. 'One might also draw some support,' said Mr Wigan, 'from the fact that such, one would have thought, sound Protestant bodies as the Church of South India, American Presbyterians and the Baptists are now encouraging prayers for the dead.' After dealing with detailed points of the service Mr Wigan added that they had made some attempt to bring language up-to-date. They had used 'eternal' instead of 'ever-lasting' and 'Spirit' instead of 'Ghost'. The principle they had worked on was to simplify familiar material rather than to produce what was entirely new.

Arguments for and against the practice of prayers for the dead were heard in the discussion of the new Burial Service. On one side it was argued that the new service was giving official sanction to a practice for which there was no scriptural authority. On the other it was claimed there had always been a body of Anglican opinion in favour of such prayer, and there was no reason why we should not ask God for something we knew he would do. The Church had not sufficiently emphasised the Communion of Saints, with its fellowship between the here and the hereafter in the Lord. A greater choice of lesson and psalms was asked for, and among practical considerations it was pointed out that the third rubric at the beginning of the service was only applicable to a cremation if the ashes were *buried* in consecrated ground. It was urged that there should be provision from a pastoral point of view for the scattering of ashes and the committal of a body to the flames.

A DRAFT ORDER FOR HOLY COMMUNION

The Draft Order for Holy Communion was introduced by Canon A. H. Couratin, who explained that the Commission had been thinking in terms of a Parish Communion, that is to say, a Sunday service with a sermon and the bulk of the congregation communicating. They felt that the service should last an hour or not much longer, of which they had allotted 30 minutes for the Word of God, including a 15-minute sermon and 30 minutes for the Sacrament. They had left the choice open between three readings (Old Testament Lesson, Epistle and Gospel) and two (Epistle or Old Testament Lesson and Gospel).

On the question of intercessions the Commission felt that something really drastic had to be done, not only with the content of the Prayer for the Church but also with its form. Nowadays, said Canon Couratin, people felt the need of petitions for particular people and institutions and causes; it was with this in mind that they had provided intercessions like a series of brackets into which contemporary petitions could be inserted.

In revising the Communion Service proper the Commission had thought of it as an imitation of the Supper, and before and after the four happenings which recalled it they had placed two devotional sections—preparation for Communion and thanksgiving for Communion. Throughout this part of the service there were numbers of permissive items, which could be left for experiment in the parishes. Those which proved their worth would survive and spread and might become normal; and those which made no appeal would fall into disuse and could be discarded.

On the question of doctrine as expressed in the Prayer of Consecration and the Words of Administration, Canon Couratin said that the Commission had tried to produce a rite which could convey either the Reformed or the Catholic meaning, into which or out of which each could read his own interpretation. ‘Maybe we were wrong about this,’ said Canon Couratin, ‘and we have certainly been called cynical and frivolous, but it seemed to us—and it still seems—that there is nothing else we can do.’ He illustrated this by pointing out that the offering of the bread and cup to the Father in the Prayer of Consecration need mean no more than that we have put the bread and cup at God’s disposal so that He might use it to

feed those who receive with faith. It could, of course, be interpreted to mean something else, but it did not assert the fully-developed doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In the same prayer the request that the bread and wine 'may be unto us the Body and Blood of Christ' was evenly poised between the subjective and the objective interpretation, while the shortened form ('The Body of Christ') of the celebrant's words in giving the bread to the communicant was merely an attempt to keep close to Holy Scripture and to provide a form which could be said slowly and reverently and would not take too much time.

The discussion of the Draft Order for Holy Communion revealed a wide measure of approval for it, and repeated demands were made for permission to use it as soon as possible. One speaker hoped that revision could be done so that a text might be available for the Convocations in May and for the Laity in June, and it was also argued that the best way of seeing how far it met the Church's needs was to use it now and review it later. Points of criticism turned on the absence of a blessing at the end of the service, the shortened form of the Words of Administration (though many approved of it), the meaning of the phrase 'We offer unto thee this bread and this cup', which some felt introduced a man-to-God movement they did not wish for at this point, and the omission of the Ten Commandments. Some of the many speakers who favoured the new draft found it 'exciting and imaginative', 'a liturgical proclamation which clearly showed the nature of the act in which the Church was taking part,' and a service which contained more joy and thanksgiving than the present Communion Service.

The Archbishop of Canterbury thought that the Consecration Prayer was the product of someone who had a bad ear and he suggested that its long series of clauses should be re-phrased as separate sentences. In reply to those who were anxious to use the service immediately he said that it was now ready for approval for use in selected parishes, but time would be taken over the consideration of improvements. He appreciated the plea to get on with new work, but he suggested that for the moment we should try to keep to the provisions made in the First Series in spite of the fact that in the long run we should be able to dispense with them.

Appendix

The Prayer Book (Alternative and other Services) Measure, 1965

INTRODUCTION

This Measure which received the Royal Assent on 23 March, 1965 is the most important of those recently passed by the Church Assembly and is long overdue. So long ago as 1906 the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline recommended that the Convocations—‘should frame, with a view to their enactment by Parliament, such modifications in the existing law relating to the conduct of divine service . . . as may tend to secure the greater elasticity which a reasonable recognition of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England and of its present needs seem to demand’. The Commission went on to recommend ‘in regard to the sanction to be given for the use of additional and special services, collects and hymns, the law should be so amended as to give wider scope for the exercise of a regulative authority’. Discussions immediately began which culminated in the presentation to Parliament of the Prayer Book Measures of 1927 and 1928. Both were rejected and the matter has been in abeyance since then.

Except for the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act, 1872, there has in fact been no amendment of the Act of Uniformity, 1662, and therefore of the Book of Common Prayer, for over 300 years. The Church of England is almost the last Church in the Anglican Communion which has not made some revision of its liturgy.

The object of the Measure is to provide in the first place for a modest and restricted autonomy for the Church in the matter of experiment. It also provides restricted authority for the production of services for special occasions for which no provision was made in the Book of Common Prayer and for the making of minor variations in existing services on particular occasions. It is emphasised that every form of service or variation authorised under the Measure must be ‘reverent and seemly and neither contrary to nor indicative of any departure from the doctrine of the Church of England’.

The Measure also provides a clear interpretation of the meaning of the words 'ordered by lawful authority'. Every priest and deacon at his ordination and every priest subsequently on taking up any ecclesiastical appointment, has to subscribe to a declaration in which he promises among other things 'to use the form in the said Book prescribed and none other, except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority'. There has been considerable doubt as to the precise meaning of these words and Clause 8 of the Measure now describes unambiguously what forms of worship will lie within the term. 'Ordered' in this context does not mean 'commanded'; it means 'provided for under lawful procedure'. Under the Measure as drafted, lawfulness will now belong to the Book of Common Prayer, to alternative services sanctioned under the Measure and to all such other provisions as are made under the authority of the Measure, together with forms of service authorised by statute by Order in Council, Royal Warrant or Royal Proclamation.

THE MEASURE

Clause 1

This provides power for the Convocations and the House of Laity by two-thirds majorities to authorise services alternative to those of the Book of Common Prayer for experimental use and to renew such authorisation. No authorisation under this Clause may be for longer than seven years. More than one alternative to a form of service in the Book of Common Prayer may be given authority at the same time, but once the first alternative has been authorised a period of fourteen years begins to run after which no further authorisation in respect of that Prayer Book Service is possible.

Clause 2

This clause provides for the sanctioning of draft forms of alternative services for selected parishes for a period of up to two years. The approval of the Convocations is required but only a bare majority is necessary. The approval of the House of Laity is not required. Draft forms can be used either before or during any period authorised under Clause 1 but not after. Two years after the first approval under Clause 2, the fourteen year period under Clause 1 for that service begins to run automatically. Therefore once variations on

a particular Prayer Book Service are authorised the Measure can only be used for a limited period for that service. When that is completed statutory authority will be required as at present.

Clause 3

This clause provides that a form of service or a draft form of service approved under either of the first two Clauses may not be used in any parish church cathedral or any church in a parish without the agreement of the parochial church council, or, in the case of the services known as the Occasional Offices, if any of the persons concerned objects.

Clause 4

This Clause authorises the Convocations of Canterbury and York to provide services for occasions for which no provision is made in the Book of Common Prayer, and also for the Ordinary (almost always the Bishop) to do so subject to any regulations made by the Convocations.

Clause 5

This Clause allows the minister, at his discretion, to make and use variations which are not of substantial importance in any form of service prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer or authorised for use under this Measure in particular circumstances.

Clause 6

This Clause authorises the minister to use forms of service considered suitable by him on occasions for which no provision has been made in the Book of Common Prayer or under Clause 4 of the Measure.

Clause 7

This Clause provides that all forms of service and all variations used by the minister under the last two Clauses, must be reverent and seemly and not contrary to or indicative of any departure from the doctrine of the Church of England. It also provides that if any question is raised on these points, or whether a variation is of substantial importance or not, it may be referred to the Bishop in order that he may give such pastoral guidance and advice as he

thinks fit, but reference to a Bishop under this Clause shall not prejudice the matter in question being made the subject of disciplinary proceedings under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure.

Clause 8

This Clause deals with the definition of lawful authority and provides that the forms of service authorised by this Measure or authorised or enjoined by the exercise of the powers or authorities set out in Clause 10 shall henceforth be the forms of service ordered by lawful authority within the meaning of the Clerical Subscription Act, 1865.

Clause 9

This Clause deals with definitions.

Clause 10

This Clause contains savings in respect of any form of service authorised by any enactment or by Order in Council, Royal Warrant or Royal Proclamation, and saves the powers of the Bishops and the Archbishop respectively to appease diversity and resolve doubts contained in the provision in the Book of Common Prayer entitled 'Concerning the Service of the Church'.

Clause 11

This Clause provides that the Measure shall come into force on a date to be determined by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. This will be 1 May, 1966. It also provides that the Measure shall extend to the whole of the Provinces of Canterbury and York except the Channel Islands.

Clause 12

This Clause provides for the short title.

For further study on the principles and problems involved in liturgical revision, see *Why Prayer Book Revision at all?* by Canon C. B. Naylor, and *Reshaping the Liturgy* by Bishop H. de Candole and Canon A. H. Couratin. Both 5/- from CIO, Church House, Westminster, London SW1.



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